

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Minutes of July 12, 2005

Meeting was held in the Music Room, Hollis Brookline High School and was called to order by Chairman, Mike Harris at 8:30 PM.

Members present: Mike Harris, Chairman; Harry Haytayan, School Board Representative; Mort Goulder, Chris Hyde; Deborah Adams, Secretary

Also present: Richard Pike, Superintendent; LeeAnn Blastos, Business Administrator; Doug Cleveland, Kathy DeLacy, Jennifer Macleod, Anita Moynihan, School Board Members; William Drescher, School District Attorney

Public Hearing

Doug explains that he was part of the negotiating team for the Hollis Support Staff. In the past Hollis and the Coop entered into joint negotiations for their support staff contracts. Both contracts are almost identical. This was the way the negotiations were originally started. The contracts were identical until they finally arrived at an impasse in late January. All parties understood the deadline, yet they were unable to reach an agreement. This went into mediation, then into fact finding. Doug points out that when negotiations fail and the parties enter into fact finding, this can be a very lengthy and expensive process, which is not binding. The school board wanted to preserve the contract and did not feel it would be fair to the staff to continue working without a contract. They met one more time after the deadline, with hopes of reaching an agreement. At this time the 2 contracts were split and changes were made to the salary increases and health insurance caps for both Hollis and the Coop. There were important issues and priorities for each district. At this last and final session, 2 separate negotiated contracts were finally approved. This also became a one year contract vs. a multiyear contract.

Doug gives presentation on the changes that were made during the negotiations. This is a one year contract for the support staff. Base salaries will be increased 3.25%. The total warrant article is for \$83,025, which includes FICA, retirement, health and dental benefits. The total budgetary impact will be a .93% increase. The health insurance cap has increased from \$800 to \$900. Dental insurance for two person coverage has increased from \$60 to \$75 per month, while the family coverage will increase from \$60 to \$83 per month. Another change will allow the para-educators to attend 3 workshops at the principal's discretion and they will be paid their normal hourly rate. Doug presents that same table that was presented at the regular district meeting in March, however this time the support staff negotiated increase figures were included. The total increase for the 2005-2006 budget for all warrant articles will be \$564,430, which is a 6.36% increase.

Chris explains that the proposed warrant article for the support staff negotiated increase represents a tax impact of \$.08 per \$1,000 of assessed value or \$8.20 per \$100,000. This calculates out to be an increase of \$28.69 for a \$350,000 home. He stresses that the previously reported estimated revenue of \$2,300,000 was incorrect. This figure is now down to \$1,600,000. This reduction in the NH Adequate Education Grant will result in a tax impact of \$.16 per \$1,000 of assessed value or \$15.83 per \$100,000. This will be an increase of \$55.40 on a \$350,000 home. Mort points out that the budget is also based on a reduction in population.

Harry argues that the contract that will be presented at the special district meeting has nothing to do with the state education funding. This information is not relevant. Chris stresses that it is relevant to the tax impact for the town.

Questions/Comments from the Public

Ellen Lencsak – She points out that although there may be less children, there are more children with more needs. These students require more services. Mike agrees and comments that this has consistently increased over the last 10 years. Mort points out that last year there were many students that were categorized incorrectly. Ellen stresses that there is more work being done by all of the staff. There are children with feeding tubes that need additional help. The cafeteria workers take extra care to ensure that children with food allergies are protected.

MaryAnne Simko – She has worked at the Primary Elementary for many years. This is the first time the negotiations have come to an impasse. This is an unusual situation. She would like to see the BudCom's support in their efforts to get this done. She agrees that this should not happen again, yet also feels it is hurtful to think that the BudCom does not support their work or their raises.

There being no further questions or comments from the public, the Public Hearing was closed at 8:25 PM.

Harry stresses that as the head of the school board he fully supports the staff, yet he does not support doing this at this time of year. He felt that the school board had an obligation to pursue all legal options to get this contract ratified. He does not wish to do this again. He doesn't see that starting the process any earlier is a good solution. The negotiations need to be started with realistic expectations. The school board intends to enter into negotiations this next time with good faith and a realistic idea of what they would like to get accomplished. He agrees that the town will eventually lose all of the state funding for education. He fully supports the presented warrant article for the special district meeting.

Mort does not support. He agrees that the staff needs more money, but this is not the solution. He recalls a failed contract negotiation in the past. He

stresses that the only way to present this problem is to get the negotiations handled on time. Kathy questions when in the past this happened before. She does not recall any time that an agreement was not reached. Mort stresses that Hollis should be more like Brookline. They get things done on time.

Chris states that he is torn. He fully understands what the procedure should be and that the negotiated contract provides a clear path and consequences if they do not meet the deadline. He explains that several years ago he moved to Hollis from Derry, which is an SB-2 Town. If people think that what is going on in Hollis is difficult, this would be dramatically increased if this were to become an SB-2 town. He is concerned that when situations like this occur, more support for SB-2 will come forward. The town will lose what they have in the town and schools if this were to happen. He stresses that the BudCom gave the school board guidance last February that they should just walk away and negotiate again next year. He felt that there was clear understanding of this. He very much supports the employees that do such a good job servicing the children, yet it pains him to say that he does not support this effort.

Mike states that he supports the salary increases for the staff, yet as a public servant he feels it is a disservice to the public to not finalize negotiation on time for the regular district meeting. Therefore he does not support this effort.

Harry states that this issue was aired during the public hearing in February. They were advised at the time that they were doing the right thing. This article was discussed at the annual meeting and passed, yet it was not legal. Based on this, he stresses that this same item should be supported now. He appeals to the BudCom to support.

Mort moves to Not recommend this warrant article. Seconded by Chris. Voting in favor – Chris, Mort, Mike. Voting opposed – Harry. The motion passed 3-1-0

Rich Pike asks to speak to the BudCom and public. He mentions that he has been quiet tonight, listening through the Coop Public Hearing and then through this meeting. He has not heard anyone speak against the substance of the contract at hand. He asks to go on record as saying that he would like to start the negotiating process in earnest, with a timetable. He would like to work closely with the BudCom and stresses that this is a 2 way process that should be open and honest. If there are any disagreements, they should be on the principal and not on the process or on the information being presented. He feels that morale is important and he would rather focus on other issues and not have the negotiations the major focus of the district. He points out that the district cannot be guaranteed that the Judge will grant a special district meeting again if the same problems come up again. It is in everyone's best interest to work together in the future.

Mort moves to adjourn. Seconded by Chris. Motion unanimously approved.

Next Meeting will be held August 23, 2005 at 7:30 PM in the Community Room, Hollis Town Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Adams, Secretary